

# How to Use Simplified and Standardized Fertilizers

FROM A CORRESPONDENT

**I**N the old days, when we wanted to paint the front door or the outside of the garden shed, we went to the oil and colour merchant, and he asked us whether we wanted the paint for old wood, new wood, inside or outside conditions, and he would mix it up for us, thinning it down or stiffening it up as he thought right and proper. To-day the oil and colour merchant is virtually no more, and we go to the ironmongers, where we find a selection of paints ready mixed and suitable, it is claimed, for a multitude of purposes. Sometimes we regret the passing of the oil and colour merchant, because we have a sneaking feeling that this standardization must be a compromise.

## In the Old Days

So, too, with our fertilizers. In the old days we used a great multitude of fertilizers—bone meal, dried blood, hoof and horn, sulphate of ammonia, sulphate of potash, superphosphate—all to supplement lavish dressings of natural manures. There is no doubt we grew wonderful crops, and we kept our ground rich and productive. Inevitably, simplification and standardization had to come. The natural manures are becoming more difficult to find. Making sufficient compost from garden waste is a time-consuming task, and one needs a great deal of waste to make any appreciable quantity of compost. Now thoughtful gardeners are becoming more conscious than ever of the need to supply our soil with organic matter. Many of us are buying sawdust, spent hops, old

mushroom bed material—anything that we can find of an organic nature—to supplement what quantities of fresh manure we can obtain.

The fertilizer manufacturers are very alive to this problem, and it is gratifying to find that some of them have applied themselves to it, and produced a balanced fertilizer with an organic base which, if not ideal for all our crops, will at least provide a good basis of plant foods. So now we can, with a fairly clear conscience, buy a mixed fertilizer, apply it to all our crops—even the lawn—in the knowledge that we have made a fair compromise, and can expect a good average result. Broadly speaking one should apply a fertilizer to the ground before sowing or planting, and supplement this with a top dressing fairly early on in the life of the plant—that is if we are growing annual crops. Perennial crops, either fruits or flowers, should be given a good dressing of fertilizer lightly pricked into the soil before growth commences.

## Cards up his Sleeve

The average garden owner may assuage his conscience by giving adequate dressings of such a complete organic fertilizer. He will see the benefit in improved growth. But the keener gardener, who knows that no single fertilizer mixture can possibly give him optimum results with every plant on every kind of soil, will keep a few cards up his sleeve. He will know, for example, that when strawberries start into new growth they will

benefit enormously from a dressing of a quick acting nitrogenous fertilizer—always providing, of course, that the ground was not heavily manured at the outset. These days it is very seldom that we find ground that has been over-manured for any crop. In the next few weeks half an ounce of sulphate of ammonia to the square yard around our strawberry plants would work wonders, but even better would be a balanced fertilizer containing phosphate and potash as well. Spring cabbages always seem to hang fire in March and at the beginning of April, and that is just the time that half an ounce of nitrate of soda, or an ounce of Nitrochalk to the yard run of row would be most appreciated.

## Blackcurrants

As one grows more familiar with one's crops, so the question of feeding them becomes simpler. Blackcurrants, for example, are gross feeders and need far more nitrogen than most of the other soft fruits. Even if we give them annual dressings of manure, they still need more nitrogen, and four ounces of sulphate of ammonia pricked into each square yard around the bushes will not be too much. All soft fruits benefit by feeding, so do our fruit trees, and this should be done both in spring and autumn. Again, four ounces to the square yard of a good organic base fertilizer pricked in now would help the trees enormously.

Lawns will need feeding, too, but it is a little early for this, and it is a subject for discussion another day.

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